



United States Department of the Interior

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

P. O. Box 26124

Albuquerque, New Mexico 87125

Confidential Claim Retracted

July 10, 1980

Memorandum

Authorized by: SC

To: Files

Date: 6/26/13

From: Environmental Scientist, SCR

Subject: Update of Developments - Jackpile-Paguate Uranium Mine
Complex - The Anaconda Copper Company

On July 8, 1980, Marc Nelson and Dale C. Jones attended a Laguna Tribal Council Meeting at the request of the Tribal attorney (request attached), to explain the ramifications of preparing an EIS on reclamation of the subject mine complex, should the Department decide to do so.

Nelson presented a discussion of the purpose, process, timing, etc., of EIS preparation, and answered questions from the Council members. The Council's principal concern was that Laguna employees at the mine would be laid off if Anaconda refused to continue with reclamation efforts while the EIS was being prepared. The Council was told that the lease, 25 CFR 177, and the previous underground mine approvals provided the Survey with authority enough to require Anaconda to continue with reclamation throughout the EIS process, but that the more complex portions of reclamation would have to wait until the EIS was completed. The Council was told that lay offs would be more likely if an EIS was not prepared at this time, but was ordered by the courts at a later date.

Nelson explained that the decision on whether to prepare an EIS is a Federal decision, but that a recommendation from the Tribal Council would be considered.

The Council of Energy Resource Tribes was represented at the meeting by John Blueyes, Reclamation Specialist, who strongly recommended that the Council pass a resolution in favor of EIS preparation. Mr. Blueyes also complimented the South Central Region on its recent efforts to resolve the Jackpile-Paguate issues. The Laguna's attorney stated that he was leaning heavily towards the preparation of an EIS, but that he wished to discuss it privately with the Council before giving a final recommendation.

The Tribal Council put off a formal recommendation until after they met with Anaconda on July 10 to discuss mine closure. However, the recommendation is expected to be in favor of an EIS preparation.



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At the Council meeting, it was learned that the Bureau of Indian Affairs had given the Laguna Pueblo \$75,000 to contract for a study of the uranium industry's impact on the Laguna's surface and subsurface water resources, including a detailed analysis of the impacts of the Jackpile-Paguate Mine complex.

The study would consist of compiling data from all available wells and springs on the reservation, and within a 60-mile radius to the north. The data would be analyzed by computer, to estimate the past and future water quality and quantity, and to identify those uranium operations which have an impact on the reservation.

The Hydro Geochem Company submitted a bid of \$144,750 for the study, which is nearly \$70,000 more than the amount given to the Laguna by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Hydro Geochem estimated that one year would be required to prepare a draft report (fact sheet attached).

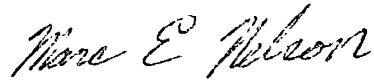
The Laguna Governor asked if the Survey would be willing to divert funds from the EIS (if it is prepared) to the Laguna water study, and then use the study during preparation of the EIS. The Governor was told that we would investigate the possibility.

I do not believe that the Laguna study would be very useful to the EIS because of its broad scope, extensive time schedule, high costs, and the lack of control the Survey would have over the study. However, since Anaconda is doing a comprehensive study, and now, the Lagunas' are doing a comprehensive study, it would seem very wasteful to perform an additional study for the EIS. Perhaps we could alter the Laguna study somewhat, to better meet the needs of the EIS.

In recent discussions with Anaconda personnel, it was learned that the mine closure date has been accelerated even further than had previously been discussed. Open pit operations are now scheduled to begin tapering off at the end of July 1980, and will be completed by December 1980. Underground mining will extend at least through July 1981, and will be extended through 1983, if the proposed adit mines are approved by the Lagunas' and the USGS.

One of these proposed mines, the P15/17 modification, was approved by the USGS on June 25, 1979, subject to the approval of the Lagunas'. The Lagunas' have not yet approved it. The other two underground mines were submitted to the USGS, but the plans were determined to be inadequate and were rejected. They will be re-submitted soon. All three plans must be approved by 1981, or the ore will be passed over.

Reclamation is expected to begin in earnest in 1981. A time schedule for the remaining work at the mine is attached.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Marc E. Nelson".

Marc E. Nelson

Enclosures